

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁴ : A61K 39/02, 39/06		A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 89/09616 (43) International Publication Date: 19 October 1989 (19.10.89)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/DK89/00075 (22) International Filing Date: 6 April 1989 (06.04.89) (30) Priority data: 1897/88 7 April 1988 (07.04.88) DK (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): SYMBI- COM AKTIEBOLAG [SE/SE]; Box 1451, Tvistevägen 48, S-901 24 Umeå (SE). (72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only) : WOLF-WATZ, Hans [SE/SE]; Djäkneböle 21223, S-905 90 Umeå (SE). NOR- QUIST, Anders [SE/SE]; Degersjö 21488, S-905 90 Umeå (SE). HAGSTRÖM, Åke [SE/SE]; Norrbyn 2131, S-901 20 Hörnefors (SE). (74) Agent: PLOUGMANN & VINGTOFT; Sankt Annæ Plads 11, DK-1250 Copenhagen K (DK).			(81) Designated States: AT, AT (European patent), AU, BB, BE (European patent), BF (OAPI patent), BG, BJ (OA- PI patent), BR, CF (OAPI patent), CG (OAPI patent), CH, CH (European patent), CM (OAPI patent), DE, DE (European patent), DK, FI, FR (European patent), GA (OAPI patent), GB, GB (European patent), HU, IT (European patent), JP, KP, KR, LK, LU, LU (European patent), MC, MG, ML (OAPI patent), MR (OAPI pa- tent), MW, NL, NL (European patent), NO, RO, SD, SE, SE (European patent), SN (OAPI patent), SU, TD (OAPI patent), TG (OAPI patent), US. Published <i>With international search report.</i>
(54) Title: FISH VACCINE COMPRISING A VIRULENT, INVASIVE BACTERIUM			
(57) Abstract A live vaccine comprising an avirulent, invasive and immunogenic strain of a fish pathogenic bacterial species is used for the immunization of fish against infectious diseases caused by fish pathogens by immersion of the fish into a suspension of the vaccine strain. Suitable strains for the preparation of said vaccine include <i>Vibrio anguillarum</i> strains DSM 4506, DSM 4507 and DSM 4508.			

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AT	Austria	FR	France	ML	Mali
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	MR	Mauritania
BB	Barbados	GB	United Kingdom	MW	Malawi
BE	Belgium	HU	Hungary	NL	Netherlands
BG	Bulgaria	IT	Italy	NO	Norway
BJ	Benin	JP	Japan	RO	Romania
BR	Brazil	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	SD	Sudan
CF	Central African Republic	KR	Republic of Korea	SE	Sweden
CG	Congo	LI	Liechtenstein	SN	Senegal
CH	Switzerland	LK	Sri Lanka	SU	Soviet Union
CM	Cameroon	LU	Luxembourg	TD	Chad
DE	Germany, Federal Republic of	MC	Monaco	TG	Togo
DK	Denmark	MG	Madagascar	US	United States of America
FI	Finland				

Fish vaccine comprising a virulent, invasive bacterium.

FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention relates to a live vaccine for the immunization of fish, a bacterium useful for the vaccine, a method of immunizing
5 fish by means of the bacterium and fish immunized by the vaccine.

TECHNICAL BACKGROUND

Infections occurring among cultured fish, principally salmonid fish, are a major source of economic loss in the fish rearing industry all over the world. It has hitherto been attempted to reduce or eliminate
10 losses resulting from certain infections of bacterial etiology (e.g. furunculosis caused by *Aeromonas salmonicida*, enteric redmouth caused by *Yersinia ruckeri* and vibriosis caused by *Vibrio anguillarum*) by means of chemotherapeutic agents such as sulfa drugs or oxytetracycline. The use of antibacterial agents, however, is rather expensive
15 and, furthermore, drug resistant strains of the various pathogenic bacteria have been known to develop. Besides, the use of antibacterial agents offers no protection against diseases of a viral etiology.

Efforts have therefore been made to develop a vaccine against selected fish pathogens. Thus, a vaccine has been developed against *Y. ruckeri* (Tebbit et al. in: *Developments in Biological Standardization*, Vol. 49, International Symposium on Fish Biologics: Serodiagnostics and Vaccines, W. Heunessen and D.P. Anderson (eds.), 1981, pp. 395-402), and *V. anguillarum* (Amend and Johnson in: *Developments in*
20 *Biological Standardization*, Vol. 49, International Symposium on Fish Biologics: Serodiagnostics and Vaccines, W. Heunessen and D.P. Anderson (eds.), 1981, pp. 403-418; Agius et al., *J. Fish Dis.* 6, 1983, pp. 129-134). These vaccines are based on formalin-killed virulent bacteria. The efficacy of these vaccines has been tested and it has
25 been shown that the route of administration of the vaccines plays an important part for the strength of the resulting immune response (Kawano et al., *Bull. Jpn. Soc. Sci. Fish.* 50, 1984, pp. 771-774; Ward et al., in *Fish Immunology*, M.J. Manning and M.F. Tatner (eds.),
30

1985, pp. 221-229). Experiments have shown that injection of a vaccine preparation gives by far the best result with the longest duration of the immunization, while immersion and oral administration give a less efficient protection against the infections in question.

- 5 An improved understanding of the pathogenic properties of the fish pathogens against which it is desired to develop a useful immune response is important for the construction of an efficient vaccine. In spite of the widespread occurrence of epizootics in fish farms caused by a variety of different pathogens, both bacterial and viral,
- 10 studies of the properties contributing to virulence have so far been limited in number. In the case of *V. anguillarum*, a number of studies have established the existence in this bacterium of a virulence plasmid of 65 kb (kilobase pairs) which encodes a complex system important to the ability of the bacterium to take up Fe^{3+} (Crosa, *Nature*
- 15 284, 1980, pp. 566-568). It has been shown for many pathogenic microorganisms that the ability to take up Fe^{3+} is important for the bacteria during the process of infection. If *V. anguillarum* is cured of the virulence plasmid, it becomes avirulent for fish (Crosa et al., *Infect. Immun.* 27, 1980, pp. 897-902).
- 20 Furthermore, a number of publications describe possible virulence determinants such as serum resistance (Trust et al., *Infect. Immun.* 34, 1981, pp. 702-707), hemolysin (Munn, *FEMS Microbiol. Lett.* 3, 1978, pp. 265-268), extracellular protease (Inamura et al., *Bull. Jap. Soc. Sci. Fish.* 51, 1985, pp. 1915-1920) and other extracellular factors
- 25 (Kodama et al., *Am. J. Vet. Res.* 45, 1984, pp. 2203-2207). It has been possible in one way or another to correlate these virulence determinants to the outbreak of disease. However, it has not yet been conclusively proved that these bacterial products are virulence determinants which are important for the pathogenicity of the bacterium.
- 30

In recent years, interest has increased in developing live vaccines based on live attenuated bacterial strains for use in the prevention of human diseases, in particular against enteric agents (Hone et al., *J. Inf. Dis.* 156, 1987, pp. 167-174; Wahdan et al., *J. Inf. Dis.* 145,

35 1982, pp. 292-295). Live vaccines generally have the advantage over

vaccines based on killed pathogens or bacterial components that they confer a higher degree of immunity as well as a more prolonged effect, and is more complete than when single components such as antigens are administered. Furthermore, they may require a smaller efficacious dosage than killed pathogens or single components. Live vaccines may also be less expensive to produce than those based on a purified single component, no purification step being required. It would therefore be an advantage to develop a live vaccine for administration to fish requiring a lower immunization dosage than existing fish vaccines based on killed pathogens or membrane components.

A need clearly exists to develop a vaccine against fish pathogens which can provoke a long-lasting and efficient immunological protection against a broad spectrum of fish pathogens after immersion of the fish into the vaccine. Ideally, such a vaccine should comprise a bacterial strain which possesses as many characteristics of the pathogenic microorganisms as possible, but without their ability to cause disease. It is of special significance to select vaccine strains which can penetrate into and proliferate in the fish body, thereby eliciting a strong immune response.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, the present invention relates to a live vaccine for the immunization of fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens, the vaccine comprising an avirulent, invasive, immunogenic mutant strain of a fish pathogenic bacterium.

The term "pathogenic" denotes the ability of a microorganism to cause disease. Pathogenicity is a taxonomically significant attribute, being the property of a species; thus, e.g. the bacterial species *Vibrio anguillarum* is said to be pathogenic for fish. The individual strain of a bacterial species may, however, vary widely in their ability to harm the host species, and this relative pathogenicity is termed "virulence". Accordingly, virulence is an attribute of a strain, not a species; one may speak of a highly virulent, a weakly virulent, or even an avirulent strain of a particular microbial species, e.g. *Vibrio anguillarum*. In general, the virulence of a

strain of a pathogenic species is determined by two factors: its "invasiveness", or ability to penetrate into and proliferate in the body of the host, and its "toxigenicity", or ability to produce chemical substances that damage the tissues of the host. A virulent strain of a bacterial species may lose its virulence, but still maintain its ability to invade the host but without causing disease.

In this context, the term "avirulent" is understood to mean that an originally virulent bacterial strain has lost its ability to cause disease in fish infected with the strain, although its ability to invade fish, i.e. to penetrate into the fish by the usual route of the bacteria and to proliferate in the body of the fish, remains substantially intact, it being a decided advantage that the bacteria are able to penetrate by themselves into the fish in order to provoke a relevant immune response there instead of having to rely on extraneous methods such as injection (this being a too costly, though efficient, administration route where fish are concerned) to arrive at a site in the fish where their presence will produce a relevant immune response. Avirulent mutants of the pathogenic bacteria may be selected by subjecting fish to experimental infections by immersion in a suspension contaminated with each mutant strain and determining the LD₅₀ (the dosage required to kill 50% of the fish in the bath), for instance as described in detail in Example 1 below. A mutant strain with an LD₅₀ of 1×10^8 /ml or more is defined as avirulent in the context of the present invention. However, for other strains useful in the live vaccine of the invention, the LD₅₀ may be lower, the strains being considered to be avirulent even so.

The degree of virulence of a particular bacterial strain may also depend on the susceptibility of different fish species to the bacteria.

In the present context, the term "mutant strain" is defined as a strain which has been isolated as a spontaneous mutant (a frequent phenomenon in nature) or in which a mutation has been deliberately induced by subjecting a parent bacterial strain to treatment with a mutagen such as ultraviolet radiation, ionizing radiation, or a chemical mutagen such as mitomycin C, 5-bromouracil, methylmethane

sulphonate, nitrogen mustard, or a nitrofur, or by applying recombinant DNA techniques.

The term "immunogenic" is understood to mean that the strain is capable of provoking a relevant immune response in the fish to which the vaccine has been administered. There is evidence to suggest that live attenuated strains may in fact provoke a stronger immune reaction than killed pathogens as the antigenic determinants of a live strain are not impaired by chemical treatment. Preferred strains of the invention are such that confer immunity against both homologous and heterologous strains of the same pathogen, i.e. both the parent strain from which the mutant is derived and other pathogenic strains of the same species, in order to afford a broad-spectrum protection against the pathogen in question. It has even been established (cf. Example 2 of the present specification) that certain mutant strains may give rise to cross-protection against another bacterial species than that to which the mutant strain belongs without any DNA from the other species coding for an antigenic determinant thereof having deliberately been inserted into the mutant. There is also some indication (cf. Example 1 of the present specification) that mutants selected or deliberately induced from virulent strains able to infect fish by immersion show a particularly high protection by the immersed vaccination, the reason possibly being that the high virulence of the parent strain reflects a high degree of invasiveness which property is retained in the mutant derived therefrom.

In another aspect, the present invention relates to an avirulent, invasive mutant strain of a fish pathogenic bacterium for use as a live vaccine for the immunization of fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens.

In a further aspect, the invention relates to the use of such a live avirulent, invasive mutant strain for the preparation of a live vaccine for the immunization of fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens, as well as a method of immunizing fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens which comprises administering to the fish an immunogenically effective amount of a live avirulent, invasive mutant strain of a fish pathogenic bacterium.

In a still further aspect, the invention relates to a fish which has been immunized with the live vaccine of the invention. This will generally belong to one of the fish species reared for commercial purposes, principally salmonid fish which have so far been of the greatest commercial importance, such as various species of the genera *Salmo*, *Salvelinus* and *Oncorhynchus*, but also eel, catfish, carp and ayu (commercially reared in Japan).

DETAILED DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

Apart from being isolated as a spontaneous mutant of a pathogenic bacterium or produced by treating a virulent pathogenic bacterium with a mutagen as indicated above, the avirulent mutant strain may also be produced by curing a virulent strain of a virulence plasmid since this makes the bacterium avirulent for fish, in the case of *V. anguillarum* a 65 kb plasmid; cf. Crosa et al., *Infect. Immun.* 27, 1980, pp. 897-902). Furthermore, the mutant strain may be one in which a gene the product of which is required for bacterial virulence is defective or absent, i.e. a strain produced by recombinant DNA techniques (this includes a defect in a promoter or a regulatory system for the gene). The gene may be one which codes for one of the postulated virulence determinants such as serum resistance, hemolysin, extracellular protease and possibly other extracellular toxic products as indicated above, but may also code for other functions or products of importance to the virulence of the bacteria.

The defect in the gene may be caused by a DNA insertion which makes the reading frame of the gene out of phase. The DNA insertion may be of any length from a single base pair to an entire gene. Shorter insertions may be carried out by site specific mutagenesis by means of synthetic oligonucleotides in a manner known per se, e.g. as described in G. Winter et al., *Nature* 299, 1982, pp. 756-758, or Zoller and Smith, *Nucl. Acids Res.* 10, 1982, pp. 6487-6500. Insertion of larger DNA fragments may be performed by gene block insertions (Forsberg and Wolf-Watz, *Mol. Microbiol.* 2, 1988, pp. 121-137); such insertions may be either in-frame (e.g. antibiotic markers) or out-of-frame.

Apart from this, the DNA insertion may be in the form of a transposon insertion. A transposon may be introduced at random into a virulent strain by conjugating this strain with a bacterium carrying a transposon in a manner known *per se* (Ely, B., *Mol. Gen. Genet.* 200, 1985, pp. 302-304). Avirulent strains resulting from the conjugation experiment may be isolated by screening for unique transposants and testing these for avirulence, for instance in the LD₅₀ test described in Example 1 below.

When producing avirulent strains by transposon insertion, there is slight risk that such strains may revert to wild-type, that is, excise the transposon DNA and once more become virulent. It should be noted, however, that strains according to the present invention produced by transposon mutagenesis have been tested for reversion by growth for 500 generations and no such reversion has occurred.

Strains which cannot revert to wild-type may be produced by partially or completely deleting a gene which produces a product essential for bacterial virulence or a promoter or regulatory system for this gene. In order to make such a deletion, it may be necessary first to identify the gene of interest. This may, for instance, be done by identifying the site of the transposon in a successfully transposed mutant by hybridization according to conventional methods (Maniatis et al., in *Molecular Cloning. A Laboratory Manual*, Cold Spring Harbor, 1982) including isolating a DNA fragment carrying part of the transposon and part of the gene by means of a synthetic homologous oligomeric sequence, and using this fragment as a probe to screen for the wild-type by conventional hybridization methods (cf. Southern, *Methods in Enzymology* 68, 1980, pp. 151-176). Once the relevant gene has been identified, it is possible to delete it partially or completely, for instance by using appropriate restriction enzymes, site-directed mutagenesis by homologous recombination with a synthetic oligonucleotide containing fewer base pairs than the DNA fragment on the gene with which it is homologous (e.g. as described by Chan and Smith, *Nucl. Acids Res.* 12, 1984, pp. 2407-2419, or G. Winter et al., *Biochem. Soc. Trans.* 12, 1984, pp. 224-225) or by introducing directly repeated nucleotide sequences at either end of the gene and selecting for mutants in which the gene has been removed by recombinational

excision. Once such defective genes have been prepared, they may be inserted into the site of intact genes in virulent strains by homologous recombination in order to produce further avirulent strains.

It is contemplated that avirulent, invasive mutant strains may be produced in this way from any of the known fish pathogenic bacteria, examples of which are strains of *Vibrio anguillarum*, *Vibrio salmonicida*, *Vibrio ordalii*, *Aeromonas salmonicida* ssp. *salmonicida* or *acromogenes*, *Aeromonas hydrophila*, *Flexibacter columnaris*, *Cytophaga* spp., *Flavobacterium* spp., *Renibacterium salmoninarum*, *Lactobacillus* spp., *Edwardsiella tarda*, *Pseudomonas* spp., *Pasteurella* spp., *Sporocytophaga* spp., *Mycobacterium* spp., *Nocardia asteroides*, *Streptomyces* spp., *Streptococcus* spp., *Eubacterium tarentellus* and *Yersinia ruckerii*. A currently preferred fish pathogen is *V. anguillarum*.

Samples of specific isolated avirulent strains of *V. anguillarum* according to the invention were deposited in accordance with the provisions of the Budapest Treaty for the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for the Purposes of Patent Procedure on 31 March, 1988, in Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen (DSM), Mascheroder Weg 1B, Braunschweig, Federal Republic of Germany with the following accession numbers:

VAN 20	DSM 4506
VAN 70	DSM 4507
VAN 1000-	DSM 4508

It will, however, be evident to persons skilled in the art that other avirulent mutants of this or another fish pathogenic bacterium may be isolated in a similar fashion, using the selection criteria and procedures indicated above and described in the examples without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

It is further contemplated that the mutant strain of the invention may be one which carries a DNA sequence coding for an antigenic determinant from another fish pathogen such as a bacterium or a virus and is capable of expressing said DNA sequence. Said DNA sequence may have any suitable length, including a sequence encoding a single epi-

tope up to a sequence coding for the entire antigen. The antigenic determinant expressed from the sequence need not be a virulence determinant, but may be any determinant which gives rise to a relevant immune response in the fish to which the vaccine is administered.

- 5 Thus, the determinant may for instance be selected from bacterial endo- or exotoxins, adhesins or viral envelope proteins or fragments thereof.

Pathogens from which the antigenic determinant may be derived may be selected from

- 10 A. Bacterial pathogens of fish and the diseases associated with them.

	Bacterium	Disease
	<i>Aeromonas salmonicida</i>	Furunculosis
	<i>Aeromonas hydrophila</i>	Motile aeromonas septicemia
15	<i>Yersinia ruckeri</i>	Enteric redmouth
	<i>Vibrio anguillarum</i>	Vibriosis
	<i>Vibrio ordalii</i>	Vibriosis
	<i>Flexibacter columnaris</i>	Columnaris
	<i>Cytophaga psychrophila</i>	Low temperature disease
20	<i>Cytophaga</i> or <i>Flavobacterium</i>	Bacterial gill disease
	<i>Renibacterium salmoninarum</i>	Bacterial kidney disease
	<i>Lactobacillus</i> sp.	Pseudokidney disease
	<i>Edwardsiella tarda</i>	Edwardsiellosis
	<i>Pseudomonas</i> sp.	Bacterial hemorrhagic septicemia
25	<i>Pasteurella</i> sp.	Pasteurellosis
	<i>Cytophaga</i> and others	Fin rot
	<i>Sporocytophaga</i> sp.	Salt water columnaris
	<i>Mycobacterium</i> sp.	Mycobacteriosis
	<i>Nocardia asteroides</i>	Nocardiosis
30	<i>Streptomyces</i> sp.	Streptomycosis
	<i>Streptococcus</i> sp.	Streptococcosis
	<i>Eubacterium tarentellus</i>	Eubacterial meningitis

B. Viruses of fish

	Virus	Group
	Infectious Pancreatic Necrosis Virus	Reovirus-like
5	Infectious Hematopoietic Necrosis Virus	Rhabdovirus
	<i>Herpesvirus salmonis</i>	Herpesvirus
	Channel Catfish Virus	Herpesvirus
	NeVTA Virus	Herpesvirus
	<i>Onchorhynchus masou</i> Virus	Herpesvirus
10	Lymphocystis Virus	Iridovirus
	Carp Gill Necrosis Virus	Iridovirus-like
	Bluegill Virus	Orthomyxovirus
	Eel Virus 2	Orthomyxovirus
	Eel Virus A	Rhabdovirus
15	Eel Virus X	Rhabdovirus
	Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus	Rhabdovirus
	Spring Viremia of Carp Virus	Rhabdovirus
	Pike Fry Rhabdovirus	Rhabdovirus
	Golden Shiner Virus	Reovirus-like
20	Eel Virus E	Reovirus-like
	Chum Salmon Virus	Reovirus
	Eel Virus 1	Ungrouped
	Grunt Fin Agent	Ungrouped

(Both tables are shown in Jorge H. Crosa (ed.), *Bacterial and Viral Diseases of Fish: Molecular Studies*. University of Washington, Seattle, 1983).

A mutant strain carrying an antigenic determinant from another fish pathogen may be prepared according to techniques which are well established in the field of human medicine where several examples of live oral vaccines comprising an antigenic determinant expressed by another organism have been developed, e.g. a hybrid *Salmonella/Shigella* vaccine (Formal et al., *Infect. Immun.* 34, 1981, pp. 746-750). Two different routes may be suggested for producing a live vaccine of this type: either a gene from the fish pathogen may be isolated, characterized and tested for antigenic properties followed by insertion

into a host bacterium, or genomic DNA from the fish pathogen may be shotgun-cloned into a host bacterium and one or more strains with a suitable antigenicity may subsequently be selected. In the latter case, the strains may be constructed by using as the cloning vector a
5 broad host range plasmid capable of replicating in, for instance, *E. coli* and the desired host strain, e.g. *V. anguillarum*. The cloning vector should furthermore carry a cloning cassette (i.e. a DNA sequence which comprises several restriction sites and is able to mobilize from *E. coli* to *V. anguillarum*). When constructing a gene library of
10 the pathogen in question, genomic DNA of the pathogen is first cloned into *E. coli*, and the vector carrying this genomic DNA is subsequently transferred to, for instance, *V. anguillarum*. The hybrid bacteria may then be used to infect fish according to the procedure described above, and 2-4 weeks later, the infected fish are tested for immunity
15 to the pathogen in question.

Although, in theory, the gene or subsequence thereof coding for the antigenic determinant may be inserted in and expressed by a bacterium which is not pathogenic to fish, it is preferred to insert it into a mutant strain of the invention in order to ensure a high degree of
20 infectivity and to obtain immunity against two or more pathogens by means of the same vaccine. It is considered to be particularly advantageous to construct an avirulent, invasive mutant strain of the invention by inserting the gene or subsequence thereof coding for the antigenic determinant into a gene of a host pathogenic bacterium the
25 product of which is required for bacterial pathogenicity, thus obtaining in one operation an avirulent mutant strain which confers immunity not only to the host bacterium, but also to the other fish pathogen. In a particular embodiment of the vaccine, not only one, but two or more DNA sequences coding for antigenic determinants from different fish pathogens have been inserted so as to obtain a vaccine
30 which offers broad-spectrum protection against a range of fish pathogens.

Once a suitable mutant strain has been isolated, it may be propagated by growing the selected strain in a suitable culture medium aerobically under conditions suited for the propagation of each bacterial
35 species for a period of time sufficient to provide at least 10^8 bac-

teria per ml of medium and harvesting the resulting bacteria from the medium. The medium is suitably a rich medium such as Trypticase Soy Broth, Luria Broth, Nutrient Broth, Brain Heart Infusion Broth, or the like containing the required carbon and nitrogen sources and
5 mineral nutrients. For cultivating seawater pathogens, the medium should additionally be supplemented with NaCl in an amount corresponding to, or slightly above, that present in seawater, typically about 1.5-2%. The cultivation temperature will typically be in the range of 18-25°C, and the pH in the range of 6.8-7.8.

10 Although it is theoretically possible to add the bacteria as grown, i.e. the culture medium containing the bacteria, to the suspension in which fish are to be immersed, it is generally preferred to produce a concentrate in order to obtain a higher count of bacteria for administration. The concentrate may, for instance, be prepared by centrifuga-
15 tion or filtration, and the bacteria may furthermore be washed before addition to the bath. The bacterial concentrate may then be added in the wet state or may, in order to facilitate transport and long-term storage, be freeze-dried or spray-dried in a manner known per se. The resulting powder may then be added directly to the immer-
20 sion bath or may be admixed with fish feed and dosed orally to the fish.

As indicated above, it has been found advantageous to immunize the fish by adding the bacterial preparation (whether wet or dried) to a suspension to which the fish are transferred for immunization purposes, since immunization by injection, although efficient in experi-
25 ments, is not a commercially viable method. Thus, administration of the mutant bacteria is preferably carried out by immersing a fish in a suitable suspension of the avirulent mutant bacteria for a period of time sufficient to effect an adequate immunization. It has
30 been found that, generally, a longer immunization time confers an improved immunity. According to the present invention, to employ immunization times of 15 minutes or more, 30 minutes having been found to confer a satisfactory immunity in the experiment described in Example 1. The suspension of avirulent, invasive mutant bacteria contains
35 1×10^2 - 1×10^8 bacteria/ml, preferably 1×10^6 - 1×10^8 bacteria/ml, a number

of 1×10^7 /ml - 2×10^7 /ml having been found to confer an adequate immunity upon immersion of the fish for 30 minutes.

During the research leading to the present invention, the present inventors have found that fish are most likely to be exposed to infections caused by virulent pathogens when the temperature of the water increases to 18°C or more (this at least being the case for *V. anguillarum*). This pattern of infectivity makes it advantageous to administer the vaccine of the invention at least once a year at a time of year when the risk of infection by fish pathogens is particularly high, or preferably immediately before this period. The dosage administered may then confer an adequate protective immunity against the infection in question for the entire period where the risk of infection is high (typically the summer months) or, if not, it may be followed up at some suitable point with one or more booster immunizations. The efficiency of the immunization may conveniently be tested by the LD₅₀ test described above.

In accordance with the invention, it may be particularly advantageous to immunize fish fry, i.e. fish with a weight of from about 3-5 g to about 20 g with the vaccine of the invention as these seem more susceptible to fish pathogens than adult fish.

Although, as indicated above, it is preferred for various reasons to use a live vaccine of the invention to immunize fish, it is contemplated that it is possible to use the avirulent mutant strain of the invention in a killed vaccine. Hence, the invention further relates to a killed vaccine for the immunization of fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens, which comprises a killed avirulent immunogenic mutant strain of a fish pathogenic bacterium. The bacteria used in the vaccine may be killed by any of the methods generally employed in the vaccine field, such as by treatment with formalin. The bacteria may otherwise exhibit the traits described above for the mutant strain of the invention, and the vaccine may be employed in substantially the same manner as described above for the live vaccine.

The invention is described in further detail in the following non-limiting examples.

EXAMPLE 1

Preparation of an avirulent, invasive mutant of V. anguillarum and its use as a live vaccine

Materials and Methods

- 5 Bacterial strains: The strains used in this study and their sources are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

	Strain	Source	Markers
10	<i>V. anguillarum</i> 775	U.B.S. Sørensen and J.L. Larsen, "Serotyping of <i>Vibrio anguillarum</i> ." <i>Appl. Environ. Microbiol.</i> 51, 1986, pp. 593-597.	
15	775.17B	This study	Rif ^r , Str ^r -derivative of 775*
	6018/1	Sørensen and Larsen, <i>supra</i>	
	53-507	Sørensen and Larsen, <i>supra</i>	
20	ATCC 19264	Publicly available from the ATCC	
	NB 10**	This study	
	NB 15	This study	Rif ^r , Ste ^r *
25	<i>E. coli</i> K 12/C 600	Ely, B. 1985. Vectors for transposon mutagenesis of non-enteric bacteria. <i>Mol. Gen. Genet.</i> 200, pp. 302-304	pRK2013:Tn5/132 Tet ^r , Amp ^{r***}

- *) chromosomal resistance to rifampicin and streptomycin; obtained as a spontaneous mutant by selection on TSA plates containing rifampicin (200 µg/ml) and streptomycin (100 µg/ml).
- **) isolated from the kidney of a rainbow trout dead from an epizootic vibriosis at a fish farm in the northern Gulf of Bothnia.
- ***) plasmid resistance to tetracycline and ampicillin.

Isolation and characterization of strain 775: The strain was isolated from a diseased fish (*Onchorhynchus kisutsch*). Swabs were inoculated on blood agar plates that were incubated for 48 hours at 25°C. Typical bacterial colonies resembling *V. anguillarum*, i.e. low convex, semitranslucent, and hemolytic, were isolated for primary identification according to the following characteristics: gram-negative motile rods which were sensitive to the vibriostatic agent O/129 (2,4-diamino-6,7-diisopropylpteridine, 10 µg/disc); catalase- and oxidase-positive; positive in the nitrate reduction and arginine decarboxylate tests; negative for lysine and ornithine decarboxylases; fermentative in the oxidation-fermentation test and able to grow in 6% NaCl but not in 7% NaCl. The strain belongs to the serotype O1 according to the system described by Sørensen and Larsen, *supra*.

Conjugation and transposition experiments: Plasmid pRK2013 was transferred from *E. coli* K 12 C600/pRK2013:Tn5-132 by conjugation on filters (Walter et al. 1975). The donor (*E. coli*) and the recipient (*V. anguillarum*) were grown overnight in Luria Broth (*E. coli*) or Brain Heart Infusion Broth supplemented with 2% NaCl (*V. anguillarum*). The strains were inoculated in fresh media and grown to 1×10^8 bacteria per ml. A mixture containing 1.5 ml donor and recipient respectively was passed through a 0.45 µm membrane filter. The filter was placed on Trypticase Soy Agar (TSA) plates supplemented with 2% NaCl for 3 hours at 18°C. After incubation, the filters were transferred to TSA plates supplemented with 2% NaCl containing tetracycline (15 µg/ml) rifampicin (200 µg/ml) and streptomycin (100 µg/ml) to select for *V. anguillarum* exconjugants. Colonies appearing on the plates was transferred to new TSA plates plus 2% NaCl plus tetracycline, rifampicin and streptomycin. After incubation, the exconjugants were frozen at -70°C before use in experimental fish infections.

Protease determination: Detection of protease activity was performed by patching the bacteria on Frazier-gelatin plates (Rodina, 1972) supplemented with 2% NaCl. After incubation at 18°C for 24 hours, the plates were flooded with 12.5% HgCl₂ in 1M HCl. A transparent zone
5 around the colony indicated proteolytic activity.

Hemolysin determination: Presence of hemolytic activity was determined by patching the bacteria on Nutrient Broth (Oxoid) supplemented with 5% horse blood and 2% NaCl.

Blotting and hybridization procedures: Chromosomal DNA, digested with
10 EcoRI and fractionated on agarose gels, was transferred to nitrocellulose filters, hybridized with a ³²P-labeled probe prepared by 5' end-labelling, and washed (Maniatis et al., 1982). The probe used was a 30-mer synthetic oligonucleotide, complementary to part of the IS_L of Tn5 (Symbicom, Umeå, Sweden).

15 **Iron requirements:** Exconjugants were tested for the ability to sequester iron by patching them on M9 plates supplemented with 2% NaCl and 25M EDDA (ethylenediamine-di(o-hydroxyphenyl) acetic acid).

Experimental fish infections: Virulence tests were carried out on rainbow trout (*Salmo gairdneri*) with a weight of 5-15 grams. The
20 bacteria was administered either by intraperitoneal injection (i.p.) or by immersion (im.). For each bacterial dilution tested, five fishes were used. The bacteria were 24-hours cultures grown in Trypticase Soy Broth (TSB) supplemented with 2% NaCl at 18°C. In the i.p. experiments, the fishes were anaesthetized with tricaine methane
25 sulphionate (100 mg/liter) and inoculated subcutaneously in the peritoneal cavity. The immersion infections were performed by adding bacteria to the aquarium in which the fishes were swimming. After 30 minutes, fresh brackish water was added, after which the fishes were maintained in brackish water for 7 days. Dead fishes were collected
30 each day and kidney samples were tested for the presence of bacteria. Virulence was expressed as the 50% lethal dose (LD₅₀) (Reed and Muench, 1938).

Immunization experiments: Fish were immersed in 2×10^7 bacteria/ml of *V. anguillarum* exconjugants, VAN 20 or VAN 70, for 30 minutes at 18°C. The fish were transferred to tanks in which they were held. Challenges were performed 1, 2, 4, 10 and 17 weeks after the initial immunization. The bacterial strains used for challenge were 775.17B and NB 10. The challenge was performed as described in the preceding sections by immersion with three successive 10-fold dilutions of the bacteria. Booster immunizations were carried out after 12 weeks in the same way as the initial immunizations.

10 RESULTS

LD₅₀ measurements of different isolates of *Vibrio anguillarum*

The 50% lethal dose of different isolates of *Vibrio anguillarum* was tested both by injecting the bacteria intraperitoneally (i.p.) or by immersing (im.) the fish in water containing bacteria. One strain of *Escherichia coli* was used as a negative control.

Table 2

Determination of LD₅₀ values of different isolates of *Vibrio anguillarum*.

20	Isolate	LD ₅₀	LD ₅₀
		i.p.	im.
	775	$<1 \times 10^2$	2×10^5
	53-507	4×10^3	2×10^7
	ATCC 19264	1×10^4	$<5 \times 10^7$
	6018/1	2×10^3	$>5 \times 10^7$
25	NB 15	$<1 \times 10^2$	5×10^7
	<i>E. coli</i> C600	4×10^6	ND*/

*/not determined

One isolate (775) was significantly more virulent after immersion than the other tested isolates. Therefore, strain 775 was chosen for

further studies, since one aim with the present investigation was to create live vaccine strains which could be distributed by immersion.

Construction of mutants

Vibrio anguillarum 775.17B was mated with *E. coli* C600/pRK2013:Tn5-132 harbouring the transposon Tn5-132 (tetracycline resistance). Tn5-132 is carried on a transposon delivery vector derived from pRK2013. Since pRK2013 is based on the ColE1 replicon and has a broad host range transfer system, it can be transferred to, but is unable to replicate, in many non-enteric gram-negative bacteria (Ely, 1985). Conjugations were performed on filters which gave a frequency of transposition of about 10^{-7} . The donor and recipient were mixed on a filter and placed on non-selective media for 3 hours. The filter was transferred to a selective plate and incubated at 18°C. Since the filters were incubated on the selective media, each colony that appeared was certain to be a unique exconjugant. The exconjugants were picked and streaked on a new selective plate. In parallel the recipient strain, 775.17B, was also passaged the same number of times on plates, to ensure that an eventual change in pathogenicity within the exconjugants was not a result of too many passages. Plasmid preparation of the exconjugants showed that the delivery plasmid vector pRK2013 did not replicate in strain 775.17B (data not shown).

Screening for avirulent exconjugants

Exconjugants were screened for virulence by infecting rainbow trout as described above. The challenge was carried out by immersing fish in water containing 5×10^6 bacteria per ml for 30 minutes. Mortality was monitored daily and the experiments were run for 7 days.

Two of the tested mutants were found to be avirulent. These two mutants, VAN 20 and VAN 70, were further tested for their virulence by infecting fish both intraperitoneally and by immersion.

LD₅₀ (i.p.) exceeded 1×10^6 bacteria and LD₅₀ (im.) exceeded 2×10^7 bacteria per ml for both strains. The corresponding LD₅₀ values for the parent strain were $< 1 \times 10^2$ and 2×10^5 (Table 2).

Characterization of exconjugants

Production of proteases and hemolytic activity has been suggested to be involved in the pathogenicity of bacteria. *V. anguillarum* exhibits both a proteolytic and a hemolytic activity. The ability of all isolated exconjugants to produce proteolytic activity was tested by patching the bacteria on a gelatin plate. None of the isolated exconjugants lacked protease activity.

Examination of the hemolytic activity on blood plates also gave positive results in all cases.

The ability to sequester low amounts of iron from the host has also been a factor suggested to be involved in virulence. The exconjugants were therefore tested on minimal plates containing the iron chelator EDDA. All exconjugants were able to grow on the plates, indicating that the transposon had not been incorporated in the 65 kb plasmid known to encode for an iron sequestering system. The plasmid was isolated from the exconjugants, whereafter the plasmid was digested with *Bam*H1. No difference was observed when the digestion pattern of the plasmid of strain 775.17B was compared to the corresponding plasmid of the exconjugants. Thus, in no case the transposon had been incorporated into the 65 kb plasmid.

The growth rate of the bacteria is a factor which might effect the virulence. To study whether the incorporation of the transposon changed the growth rate of the exconjugants, the two avirulent plus four virulent exconjugants and the wild type strain were grown in MOPS minimal media (Neidhardt et al., 1974) at 20°C. The wild type strain, 775.17B, grew faster than the mutants, but no correlation could be observed between growth rate and degree of virulence among the exconjugants (Table 3).

Table 3

The growth rate of exconjugants and the wild type strain in MOPS minimal media

	VAN	VAN	VAN	VAN	VAN	VAN	775
5	1	2	6	7	20	70	17B

	Growth rate (min.)	226	189	254	243	219	240	186
--	--------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

In order to investigate if the transposon had been incorporated randomly into the chromosome, chromosomal DNA of six different exconjugants were isolated digested with *EcoRI*, and separated on an agarose gel. The DNA was then transferred to a nitrocellulose filter. Filter hybridization was performed by the use of a ³²P-labeled oligonucleotide, which had complete homology to nucleotides 49 to 78 in the inverted repeat of Tn5-132. All six exconjugants showed different hybridization patterns (Fig. 1). Tn5-132 has an *EcoRI* site in the middle of the transposon, explaining the appearance of two bands in each lane. The parent strain 775 was also digested and blotted but no hybridization was observed. Thus, it can be concluded that the transposon had been incorporated randomly into the chromosome of the different exconjugants.

20 Use of avirulent exconjugants as vaccines

The two avirulent exconjugants, VAN 20 and VAN 70, were tested for their potential ability as live vaccines against vibriosis. Fish were immersed in a bacterial suspension, containing either VAN 20 or VAN 70, at a concentration of 2×10^7 bacteria per ml for 30 minutes at 18°C. Challenge was performed 1, 2, 4, 10 and 17 weeks after vaccination. Two different strains were used as challenge organisms, the homologous 775.17B and a heterologous strain NB 10. The latter strain exhibits a very low LD₅₀ value when the fish are infected by immersion. The challenge was carried out by bathing the fish in water containing three different concentrations of the test strains. This made it possible to determine the LD₅₀ values of the vaccinated fish compared to non-vaccinated fish. Two weeks after immunization, the

vaccinated fish showed an increased resistance against the homologous strain, observed as a 10 to 30-fold increase in the LD₅₀ value (Table 4).

Table 4

5 Numbers per ml of strain 775.17 and strain NB 10 causing 50% mortality of vaccinated or non-vaccinated rainbow trout (*Salmo gairdneri*) 1, 2, 4, 10 and 17 weeks after immunization

		LD ₅₀			
		vacc.	(bact./ml)		
10	weeks	strain			
	after				
	immun.		none	VAN20	VAN70
<hr/>					
	* /				
15	1		3x10 ⁶	5x10 ⁶	3x10 ⁶
	2		2x10 ⁶	2x10 ⁷	6x10 ⁷
	4		5x10 ⁶	5x10 ⁷	9x10 ⁶
	10		5x10 ⁶	5x10 ⁷	3x10 ⁷
	12			BOOSTER	BOOSTER
20	17		2x10 ⁶	3x10 ⁶ 9x10 ⁷	2x10 ⁶ 1x10 ⁸
<hr/>					
	# /				
	17		5	10 10	8 2x10 ⁵

25 * - challenge with 775.17

= challenge with NB 10

After 4 weeks, the protection was still significant and even after 10 weeks, the protection was held on the same level. When the immunized fish were challenged with the heterologous strain NB 10, a weak positive effect was also observed. 12 weeks after the immunization, a booster dose was administered. After 17 weeks, the non-boostered fish were no longer protected. However, the boosted fish showed high levels of protection. It should be noted that protection against NB 10 (i.e. the heterologous strain) was observed in the VAN70 boosted fish.

Based on these results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) It was possible to produce avirulent mutants by transposing the transposon Tn5-132 into *Vibrio anguillarum* by using the broad host range delivery vector pRK2013. The vector could not replicate in *V. anguillarum*.
- 2) The transposon was incorporated randomly into the chromosome of the recipient.
- 3) It was possible to isolate exconjugants which were avirulent to rainbow trout in laboratory infection experiments.
- 4) The avirulent mutants were not affected in any of the tested potential virulence properties.
- 5) The use of the avirulent exconjugants as live vaccines gave an increased resistance both to homologous and heterologous pathogenic agents.

EXAMPLE 2

The strain VAN1000 was isolated as a streptomycin and rifampicin resistant spontaneous mutant of *V. anguillarum* 775.17B by selection on TSA plates supplemented with 200 µg/ml of rifampicin, followed by selection on TSA plates supplemented with 100 µg/ml of streptomycin substantially as described in Example 1.

The isolated strain was subjected to LD₅₀ measurements as described in Example 1. The LD₅₀ was greater than 1×10^8 /ml.

Immunization experiments were carried out as described in Example 1 by immersing fish in water containing 1×10^7 /ml of VAN1000. The results, which were measured by determining the increase in the LD₅₀ value, are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Weeks after immunization			Strain <i>V. anguillarum</i>		Strain <i>V. anguillarum</i>		Strain <i>A. salmonicida</i> *	
			775.17B		NB 10			
5			LD ₅₀		LD ₅₀		LD ₅₀	
			(per ml)		(per ml)		(per ml)	
			control vacc.		control vacc.		control vacc.	
10	Exp 1	1	2x10 ⁶	1x10 ⁸	< 10	7x10 ⁵	1x10 ²	2x10 ⁵
		2	5x10 ⁵	1x10 ⁸	< 10	1x10 ⁶		
		3	2x10 ⁵	>7x10 ⁸	< 10	8x10 ⁶	1x10 ²	2x10 ⁵
15	Exp 2	4	5x10 ⁶	>5x10 ⁸				
		10	3x10 ⁶	>3x10 ⁸	< 10	3x10 ⁵		
		12					1x10 ²	2x10 ⁵
		17	4x10 ⁶	>4x10 ⁸	< 10	>3x10 ⁷		

*) A wild-type strain obtained isolated from an outbreak of furunculosis in the Baltic.

It appears from Table 5 that VAN1000 not only confers protection against a homologous and heterologous strain of *V. anguillarum*, but also cross-protection against *A. salmonicida*.

EXAMPLE 3

A field immunization trial was carried out using the strain VAN1000. In January 1988, 200 rainbow trout (*Salmo gairdneri*) were vaccinated as described in Examples 1 and 2 by immersing the fish in water containing 1x10⁷/ml of the above strain for 30 minutes at a temperature of 18°C. The vaccinated fish were kept in 1 m³ trays from the time of vaccination until September 1988. Unvaccinated fish which were kept in two other trays (2000 and 1000 fish, respectively) served as controls.

The incoming water was unpurified brackish water from the Baltic Sea, and the water was the only source of infection. The water inlet was shared by all three trays.

5 Outbreaks of vibriosis were monitored in the trays by recording the number of fish dying in each individual tray. The disease was confirmed by isolating *Vibrio anguillarum* from a representative number of dead fish. Outbreaks of fatal vibriosis occurred during July at two different occasions in the two trays with unvaccinated fish. No significant deaths of fish were observed after the month of July in 10 the control groups. In the vaccinated group of fish, however, only 1 fish died in the beginning of the month, during which period outbreaks were not observed in the control trays. During the outbreaks in the unvaccinated fish groups, no deaths occurred in the vaccinated fish.

15 The results are illustrated in Fig. 2, in which the number of dead fish are given as a percentage of the total number of live fish in the trays. In the figure, a denotes unvaccinated fish in tray No. 1; b denotes unvaccinated fish in tray No. 2; and c denotes vaccinated fish.

20 In conclusion, the VAN1000 strain has conferred a significant protection against a natural infection challenge under field conditions in susceptible rainbow trout.

LITERATURE

- Agius, C., M.T. Horne, and P.D. Ward, 1983. Immunisation of rainbow trout, *Salmo gairdneri* Richardson, against vibriosis: comparison of an extract antigen with whole cell bacterins by oral and intraperitoneal routes. *J. Fish Dis.* 6: pp. 129-134.
- 5
- Crosa, J.H. 1980. A plasmid associated with virulence in the marine fish pathogen *Vibrio anguillarum* specifies an iron-sequestering system. *Nature* 284, pp. 566-568.
- Ely, B. 1985. Vectors for transposon mutagenesis of non-enteric bacteria. *Mol. Gen. Genet.* 200, pp. 302-304.
- 10
- Hone, D., R. Morona, S. Attridge, and J. Hackett, 1987. Construction of defined galE mutant of *Salmonella* for use as vaccines. *J. Inf. Dis.* 156, pp. 167-174.
- Inamura, H., K. Muroga, and T. Nakai, 1984. Toxicity of extracellular products of *Vibrio anguillarum*, *Fish Pathol.* 19, pp. 89-96.
- 15
- Inamura, H., T. Nakai, and K. Muroga, 1985. An extracellular protease produced by *Vibrio anguillarum*. *Bull. Jap. Soc. Sci. Fish.* 51, pp. 1915-1920.
- Kawano, K., T. Aoki, and T. Kitao, 1984. Duration of protection against vibriosis in ayu, *Plecoglossus altivelis*, vaccinated by immersion and oral administration with *Vibrio anguillarum*. *Bull. Jpn. Soc. Sci. Fish.* 50, pp. 771-774.
- 20
- Kodama, H., M. Moustafa, S. Ishiguro, T. Mikami, and H. Izawa, 1984. Extracellular virulence factors of fish *Vibrio*: Relationships between toxic material, haemolysin and proteolytic enzyme. *Am. J. Vet. Res.* 45, pp. 2203-2207.
- 25
- Maniatis, T., E.F. Fritsch, and J. Sambrook, 1982. Molecular cloning. A laboratory manual. Cold Spring Harbor, New York.

- Mumm, C.B., 1978. Haemolysin production by *Vibrio anguillarum*. *FEMS Microbiol. Lett.* 3, pp. 265-268.
- Neidhardt, P.C., P.L. Bloch, and D.F. Smith, 1974. Culture medium for enterobacteria. *J. Bacteriol.* 119, pp. 736-747.
- 5 Reed, L.J., and H. Muench, 1938. A simple method on estimating fifty per cent endpoints. *Am. J. Hyg.* 27, pp. 493-497.
- Rodina, A.G., 1972. Methods in aquatic microbiology, pp. 254-255.
- Trust, T.J., I.D. Courtice, A.G. Khouri, J.H. Crosa, and M.H. Schiewe, 1981. Serum resistance and haemagglutination ability of marine
10 vibrios pathogenic to fish. *Infect. Immun.* 34, pp. 702-707.
- Wahden, M.H., C- Se'rie', Y. Cerisier, S. Sallam, and R. Germanier, 1982. A controlled field trial of live *Salmonella typhi* strain Ty 21a oral vaccine against typhoid: three-year results. *J. Inf. Dis.* 145, pp. 292-295.
- 15 Walter, M.A., S.A. Potter, and J.H. Cross, 1983. Iron uptake system mediated by *Vibrio anguillarum* plasmid pJM1. *J. Bacteriol.* 156, pp. 880-887.
- Ward, P.D., M.F. Tatner, and M.T. Horne, 1985. Factors influencing the efficacy of vaccines against vibriosis caused by *Vibrio anguillarum*. In "Fish Immunology". M.J. Manning and M.F. Tatner (eds.), pp.
20 221-229.
- Wolf, M.K., and J.H. Crosa, 1986. Evidence for the role of a siderophore in promoting *Vibrio anguillarum* infections. *J. Gen. Microbiol.* 132, pp. 2949-2952.

327988/LS/NO

International Application No: PCT/

MICROORGANISMSOptional Sheet in connection with the microorganism referred to on page 8, line 21 of the description ¹**A. IDENTIFICATION OF DEPOSIT ²**Further deposits are identified on an additional sheet ☒ ³Name of depositary institution ⁴

Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen (DSM)

Address of depositary institution (including postal code and country) ⁴Mascheroder Weg 1b
D-3300 Braunschweig
Federal Republic of GermanyDate of deposit ⁵

31 March, 1988

Accession Number ⁶

DSM 4506

B. ADDITIONAL INDICATIONS ⁷ (leave blank if not applicable). This information is continued on a separate attached sheet ☐

As regards the respective Patent Offices of the respective designated states, the applicant requests that a sample of the deposited microorganisms only be made available to an expert nominated by the requester until the date on which the patent is granted or the date on which the application has been refused or withdrawn or is deemed to be withdrawn

C. DESIGNATED STATES FOR WHICH INDICATIONS ARE MADE ⁸ (If the indications are not for all designated States)**D. SEPARATE FURNISHING OF INDICATIONS ⁹** (leave blank if not applicable)The indications listed below will be submitted to the International Bureau later ⁹ (Specify the general nature of the indications e.g., "Accession Number of Deposit")**E. ☒** This sheet was received with the international application when filed (to be checked by the receiving Office)

06 APRIL 1989

Anne Tuxen - Jiraldi
(Authorized Officer)☐ The date of receipt (from the applicant) by the International Bureau ¹⁰

was

(Authorized Officer)

MICROORGANISMSOptional Sheet in connection with the microorganism referred to on page 8, line 22 of the description ¹**A. IDENTIFICATION OF DEPOSIT ²**Further deposits are identified on an additional sheet ☒ ³Name of depositary institution ⁴

Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen (DSM)

Address of depositary institution (including postal code and country) ⁴Mascheroder Weg 1b
D-3300 Braunschweig
Federal Republic of GermanyDate of deposit ⁵

31 March, 1988

Accession Number ⁶

DSM 4507

B. ADDITIONAL INDICATIONS ⁷ (leave blank if not applicable). This information is continued on a separate attached sheet ☐

As regards the respective Patent Offices of the respective designated states, the applicant requests that a sample of the deposited microorganisms only be made available to an expert nominated by the requester until the date on which the patent is granted or the date on which the application has been refused or withdrawn or is deemed to be withdrawn

C. DESIGNATED STATES FOR WHICH INDICATIONS ARE MADE ⁸ (if the indications are not for all designated States)**D. SEPARATE FURNISHING OF INDICATIONS ⁹** (leave blank if not applicable)The indications listed below will be submitted to the International Bureau later ⁹ (Specify the general nature of the indications e.g., "Accession Number of Deposit")**E.** ☐ This sheet was received with the international application when filed (to be checked by the receiving Office)

NO/DK 06 APRIL 1989

Anne Tuxen - Jiraldi
(Authorized Officer)☐ The date of receipt (from the applicant) by the International Bureau ¹⁰

was

(Authorized Officer)

327988/LS/NO

International Application No: PCT/

MICROORGANISMSOptional Sheet in connection with the microorganism referred to on page 8, line 23 of the description ¹**A. IDENTIFICATION OF DEPOSIT ²**Further deposits are identified on an additional sheet ☐ ³Name of depositary institution ⁴

Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen (DSM)

Address of depositary institution (including postal code and country) ⁴Mascheroder Weg 1b
D-3300 Braunschweig
Federal Republic of GermanyDate of deposit ⁵

31 March, 1988

Accession Number ⁶

DSM 4508

B. ADDITIONAL INDICATIONS ⁷ (leave blank if not applicable). This information is continued on a separate attached sheet ☐

As regards the respective Patent Offices of the respective designated states, the applicant requests that a sample of the deposited microorganisms only be made available to an expert nominated by the requester until the date on which the patent is granted or the date on which the application has been refused or withdrawn or is deemed to be withdrawn

C. DESIGNATED STATES FOR WHICH INDICATIONS ARE MADE ⁸ (If the indications are not for all designated States)**D. SEPARATE FURNISHING OF INDICATIONS ⁹** (leave blank if not applicable)The indications listed below will be submitted to the International Bureau later ⁹ (Specify the general nature of the indications e.g., "Accession Number of Deposit")**E.** ☐ This sheet was received with the international application when filed (to be checked by the receiving Office)

NO/DK 06 APRIL 1989

Anne Tuxen - Ginaldei
(Authorized Officer)☐ The date of receipt (from the applicant) by the International Bureau ¹⁰

was

(Authorized Officer)

CLAIMS

1. A live vaccine for the immunization of fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens, which comprises an avirulent, invasive, immunogenic mutant strain of an originally virulent fish pathogenic
5 bacterium.
2. A vaccine according to claim 1, wherein the mutant strain is an isolated spontaneous mutant.
3. A vaccine according to claim 1, wherein the mutant strain has been subjected to treatment with a mutagen such as ultraviolet radiation,
10 ionizing radiation or a chemical mutagen.
4. A vaccine according to claim 1, wherein the mutant strain has been cured of a virulence plasmid.
5. A vaccine according to claim 1, wherein a gene in said mutant strain the product of which is required for bacterial virulence is
15 defective or absent.
6. A vaccine according to claim 5, wherein the gene codes for a virulence determinant.
7. A vaccine according to claim 5 or 6, wherein said gene contains a DNA insertion.
- 20 8. A vaccine according to claim 7, wherein said DNA insertion is a transposon insertion.
9. A vaccine according to claim 5 or 6, wherein said gene is partially or completely deleted.
- 25 10. A vaccine according to claim 1, wherein the mutant strain is a strain of *Vibrio anguillarum*, *Vibrio salmonicida*, *Vibrio ordalii*, *Aeromonas salmonicida* ssp. *salmonicida* or *acromogenes*, *Aeromonas hydrophila*, *Flexibacter columnaris*, *Cytophaga* spp., *Flavobacterium* spp., *Renibacterium salmoninarum*, *Lactobacillus* spp., *Edwardsiella*

tarda, *Pseudomonas* spp., *Pasteurella* spp., *Sporocytophaga* spp., *Mycobacterium* spp., *Nocardia asteroides*, *Streptomyces* spp., *Streptococcus* spp., *Eubacterium tarentellus* and *Yersinia ruckerii*.

11. A vaccine according to claim 10, wherein the mutant strain is a strain of *V. anguillarum*.
12. A vaccine according to claim 11, wherein the strain is selected from VAN 1000 (accession No. DSM 4508), VAN 20 (accession No. DSM 4506) and VAN 70 (accession No. DSM 4507).
13. A vaccine according to claim 11, wherein the mutant strain of the fish pathogenic bacterium carries a DNA sequence coding for an antigenic determinant of another fish pathogen such as a bacterium or a virus and is capable of expressing said DNA sequence.
14. A vaccine according to claim 13, wherein the DNA sequence coding for the antigenic determinant is inserted in a gene coding for a product required for bacterial virulence.
15. A vaccine according to claim 13, wherein the mutant strain carries two or more DNA sequences coding for antigenic determinants from different fish pathogens.
16. An avirulent, invasive, immunogenic mutant strain of a fish pathogenic bacterium for use as a live vaccine for the immunization of fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens.
17. A mutant strain according to claim 16, wherein the mutant strain is an isolated spontaneous mutant.
18. A mutant strain according to claim 16, wherein the mutant strain has been subjected to treatment with a mutagen such as ultraviolet radiation, ionizing radiation or a chemical mutagen.
19. A mutant strain according to claim 16, wherein the mutant strain has been cured of a virulence plasmid.

20. A mutant strain according to claim 16, wherein a gene in said mutant strain the product of which is required for bacterial virulence is defective or absent.
21. A mutant strain according to claim 20, wherein the gene codes for a virulence determinant.
22. A mutant strain according to claim 20 or 21, wherein said gene contains a DNA insertion.
23. A mutant strain according to claim 22, wherein said DNA insertion is a transposon insertion.
24. A mutant strain according to claim 20 or 21, wherein said gene is partially or completely deleted.
25. A mutant strain according to claim 16, wherein the mutant strain is a strain of *Vibrio anguillarum*, *Vibrio salmonicida*, *Vibrio ordalii*, *Aeromonas salmonicida* ssp. *salmonicida* or *acromogenes*, *Aeromonas hydrophila*, *Flexibacter columnaris*, *Cytophaga* spp., *Flavobacterium* spp., *Renibacterium salmoninarum*, *Lactobacillus* spp., *Edwardsiella tarda*, *Pseudomonas* spp., *Pasteurella* spp., *Sporocytophaga* spp., *Mycobacterium* spp., *Nocardia asteroides*, *Streptomyces* spp., *Streptococcus* spp., *Eubacterium tarentellus* and *Yersinia ruckerii*.
26. A mutant strain according to claim 25, wherein the mutant strain is a strain of *V. anguillarum*.
27. A mutant strain according to claim 26, wherein the strain is selected from VAN 1000 (accession No. DSM 4508), VAN 20 (accession No. DSM 4506) and VAN 70 (accession No. DSM 4507).
28. A mutant strain according to claim 16, wherein the mutant strain of the fish pathogenic bacterium carries a DNA sequence coding for an antigenic determinant of another fish pathogen such as a bacterium or a virus and is capable of expressing said DNA sequence.

29. A mutant strain according to claim 28, wherein the DNA sequence coding for the antigenic determinant is inserted in a gene coding for a product required for bacterial virulence.
30. A mutant strain according to claim 29, wherein the mutant strain carries two or more DNA sequences coding for antigenic determinants from different fish pathogens.
31. Use of a live avirulent, invasive, immunogenic mutant strain according to any of claims 16-28 for the preparation of a live vaccine for the immunization of fish against diseases caused by fish pathogenic bacteria.
32. A method of immunizing fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens, the method comprising administering to the fish an immunogenically effective amount of a live avirulent, invasive immunogenic mutant strain of a fish pathogenic bacterium according to any of claims 16-28.
33. A method according to claim 32, wherein the administration is carried out by immersing the fish in a suspension of the avirulent mutant bacteria for a period of time sufficient to effect an adequate immunization.
34. A method according to claim 33, wherein the suspension of the avirulent, invasive mutant bacteria has a temperature of 0-25°C, preferably 0-18°C.
35. A method according to claim 33, wherein the suspension of avirulent, invasive mutant bacteria contains 1×10^2 - 1×10^8 bacteria per ml, preferably 1×10^6 - 1×10^8 bacteria per ml.
36. A method according to claim 33, wherein the NaCl concentration of the suspension of avirulent, invasive mutant bacteria is at least 0.3%.

37. A method according to claim 32, wherein the bacteria are administered to the fish at least once at a time of year when the risk of infection by fish pathogens is particularly high.

38. A method according to claim 32, wherein the fish are fish fry.

5 39. A fish which is immunized with a live vaccine according to any of claims 1-15.

40. A fish according to claim 39 which is a salmonid species of the genera *Salmo*, *Salvelinus* or *Oncorhynchus*, an eel, a catfish, a carp or an ayu.

10 41. A killed vaccine for the immunization of fish against diseases caused by fish pathogens, which comprises a killed avirulent, invasive, immunogenic mutant strain of a fish pathogenic bacterium.

42. A killed vaccine according to claim 41, wherein the mutant strain is as defined in any of claims 17-30.

1/2

A B C D E F

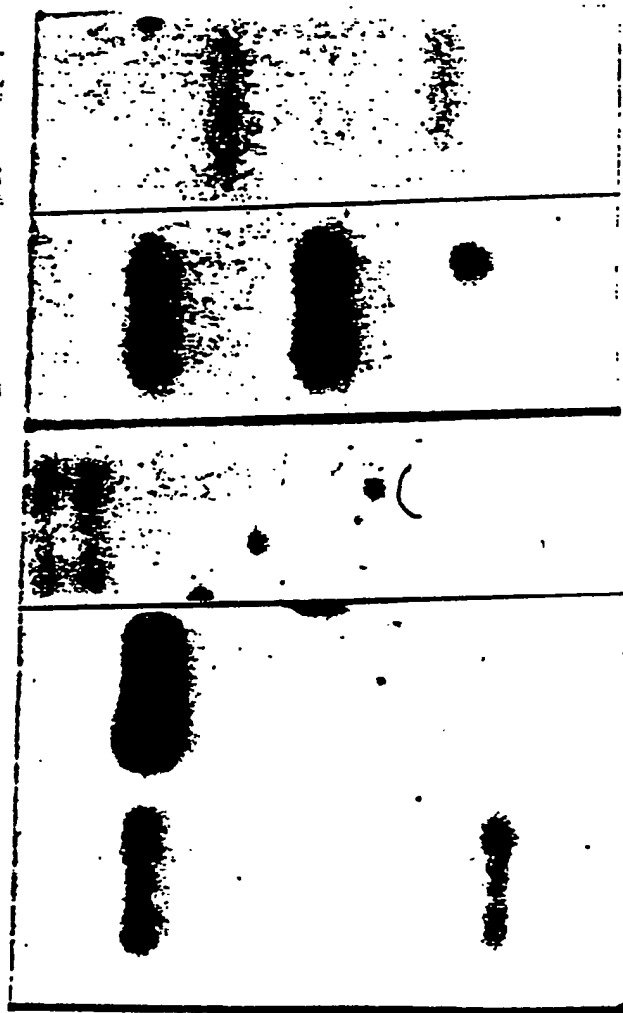


Fig. 1.

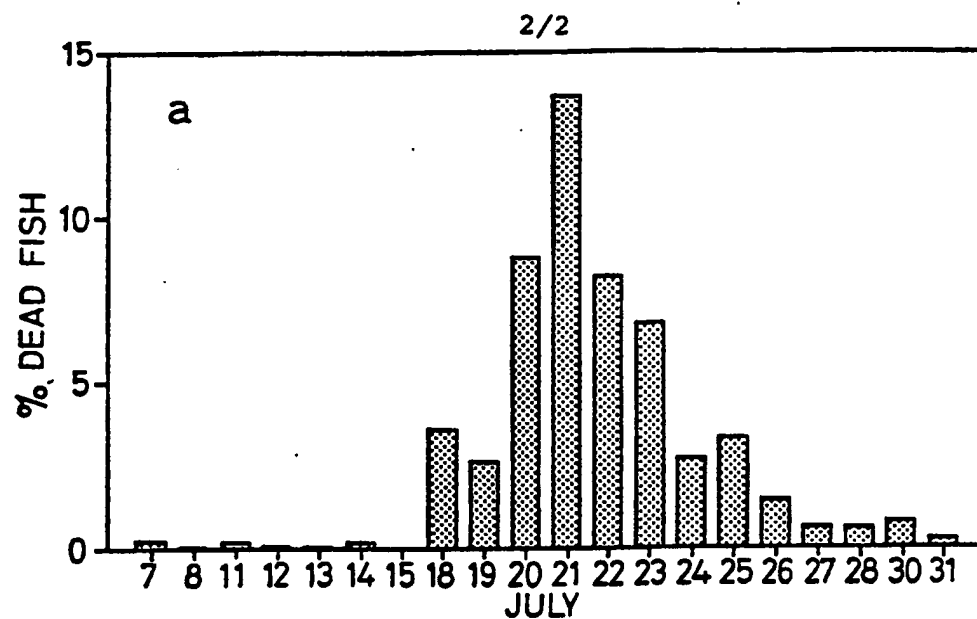
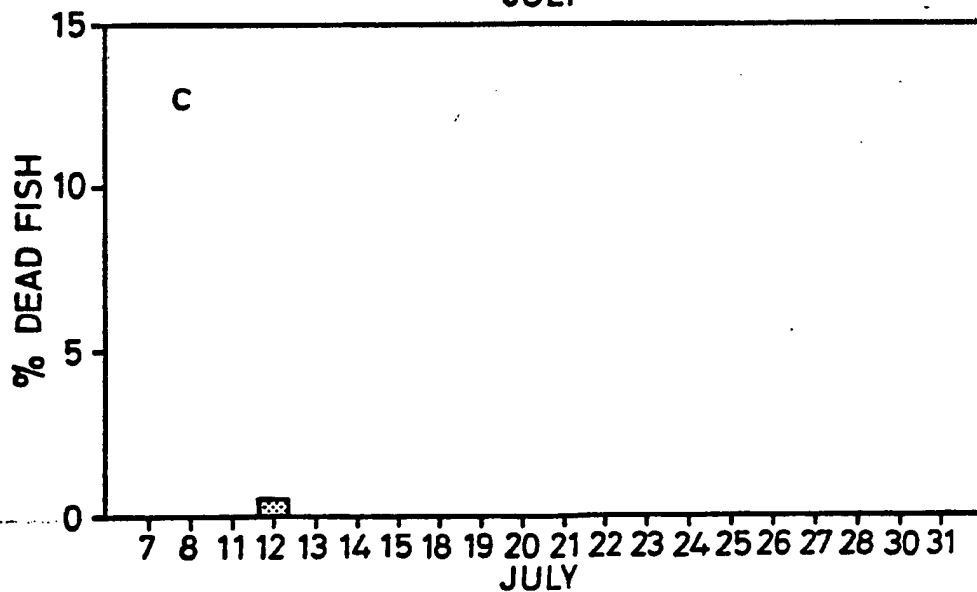
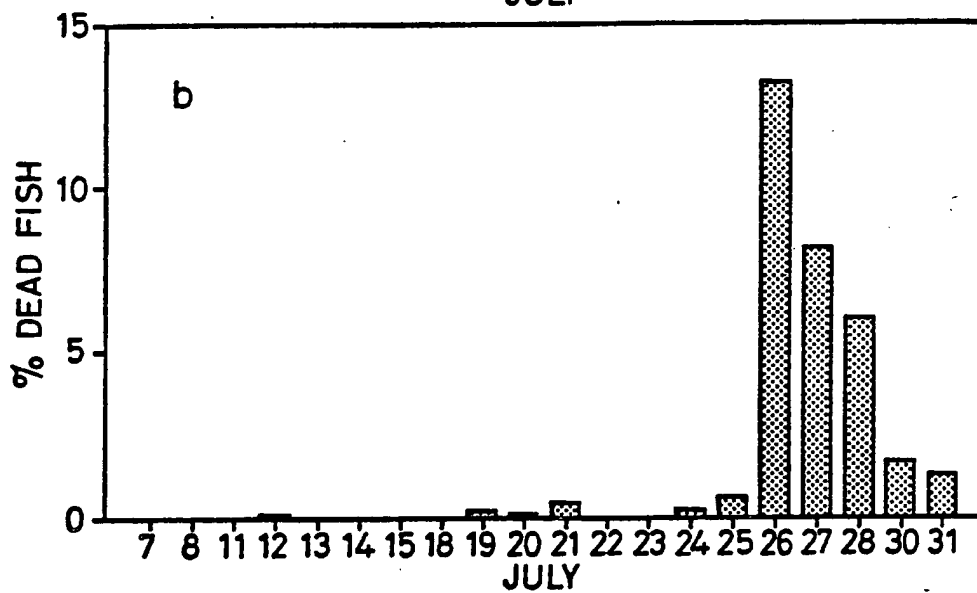


Fig. 2



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No PCT/DK89/00075

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (if several classification symbols apply, indicate all) ⁶ According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC ⁴ <div style="margin-top: 10px;">A 61 K 39/02, 39/06</div>																							
II. FIELDS SEARCHED <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Minimum Documentation Searched ⁷</div> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 5px;"> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;">Classification System</th> <th style="width: 70%;">Classification Symbols</th> </tr> <tr> <td>IPC 4</td> <td>A 61 K 39/00, 39/02, 39/106</td> </tr> <tr> <td>US C1</td> <td>424: 92, 93</td> </tr> </table> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation to the Extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched ⁸</div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;">SE, NO, DK, FI classes as above</div>			Classification System	Classification Symbols	IPC 4	A 61 K 39/00, 39/02, 39/106	US C1	424: 92, 93															
Classification System	Classification Symbols																						
IPC 4	A 61 K 39/00, 39/02, 39/106																						
US C1	424: 92, 93																						
III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT ⁹ <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 10%;">Category ⁹</th> <th style="width: 60%;">Citation of Document, ¹¹ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹²</th> <th style="width: 30%;">Relevant to Claim No. ¹³</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: top;">X</td> <td>WO, A1, 8202491 (THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON) 5 August 1982</td> <td>1, 2, 4-6, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-32</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: top;">Y</td> <td></td> <td>33-36, 41-42</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: top;">Y</td> <td>Journal of Bacteriology, Oct. 1981, Vol. 148, No. 1, p. 333-340 (E E ISHIGURO et al.): "Loss of Virulence During Culture of Aeromonas salmonicida at High Temperature" whole document</td> <td>1, 2, 4-6, 10, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-36, 41-42</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: top;">Y</td> <td>Journal of Bacteriology, Sept. 1981, Vol. 147, No. 3, p. 1077-1084 (W W KAY et al.): "Purification and Disposition of a Surface Protein Associated with Virulence of Aeromonas salmonicida" see page 1077, left col.</td> <td>1, 2, 4-6, 10, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-36, 41-42</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: top;">X</td> <td>GB, A, 2 170 08 (MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE) 13 August 1986 see claim 1</td> <td>1, 16, 31, 32</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: right; padding-right: 20px;">.../...</td> </tr> </table> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>¹⁰ Special categories of cited documents:</p> <p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>"A" document member of the same patent family</p> </div> </div> </div>			Category ⁹	Citation of Document, ¹¹ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹²	Relevant to Claim No. ¹³	X	WO, A1, 8202491 (THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON) 5 August 1982	1, 2, 4-6, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-32	Y		33-36, 41-42	Y	Journal of Bacteriology, Oct. 1981, Vol. 148, No. 1, p. 333-340 (E E ISHIGURO et al.): "Loss of Virulence During Culture of Aeromonas salmonicida at High Temperature" whole document	1, 2, 4-6, 10, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-36, 41-42	Y	Journal of Bacteriology, Sept. 1981, Vol. 147, No. 3, p. 1077-1084 (W W KAY et al.): "Purification and Disposition of a Surface Protein Associated with Virulence of Aeromonas salmonicida" see page 1077, left col.	1, 2, 4-6, 10, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-36, 41-42	X	GB, A, 2 170 08 (MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE) 13 August 1986 see claim 1	1, 16, 31, 32	.../...		
Category ⁹	Citation of Document, ¹¹ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹²	Relevant to Claim No. ¹³																					
X	WO, A1, 8202491 (THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON) 5 August 1982	1, 2, 4-6, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-32																					
Y		33-36, 41-42																					
Y	Journal of Bacteriology, Oct. 1981, Vol. 148, No. 1, p. 333-340 (E E ISHIGURO et al.): "Loss of Virulence During Culture of Aeromonas salmonicida at High Temperature" whole document	1, 2, 4-6, 10, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-36, 41-42																					
Y	Journal of Bacteriology, Sept. 1981, Vol. 147, No. 3, p. 1077-1084 (W W KAY et al.): "Purification and Disposition of a Surface Protein Associated with Virulence of Aeromonas salmonicida" see page 1077, left col.	1, 2, 4-6, 10, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 31-36, 41-42																					
X	GB, A, 2 170 08 (MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE) 13 August 1986 see claim 1	1, 16, 31, 32																					
.../...																							
IV. CERTIFICATION <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search <div style="margin-top: 10px;">1989-07-04</div> </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Date of Mailing of this International Search Report <div style="margin-top: 10px;">1989 -07- 1 3</div> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> International Searching Authority <div style="margin-top: 10px;">Swedish Patent Office</div> </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Signature of Authorized Officer <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> Carl Olof Gustafsson </div> </td> </tr> </table>			Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search <div style="margin-top: 10px;">1989-07-04</div>	Date of Mailing of this International Search Report <div style="margin-top: 10px;">1989 -07- 1 3</div>	International Searching Authority <div style="margin-top: 10px;">Swedish Patent Office</div>	Signature of Authorized Officer <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> Carl Olof Gustafsson </div>																	
Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search <div style="margin-top: 10px;">1989-07-04</div>	Date of Mailing of this International Search Report <div style="margin-top: 10px;">1989 -07- 1 3</div>																						
International Searching Authority <div style="margin-top: 10px;">Swedish Patent Office</div>	Signature of Authorized Officer <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> Carl Olof Gustafsson </div>																						

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT (CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET)		
Category *	Citation of Document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to Claim No
X	DIALOG, File BIOSIS PREVIEWS, DIALOG Accession No. 0015214877 (BIOSIS Accession No. 79104873), Olivier G. et al.: "Immunogenicity of vaccines from a virulent and an avirulent strain of <i>Aeromonas-salmonicida</i> " & J. Fish Dis 8(1) 1985	41-42
X	DIALOG, File BIOSIS PREVIEWS, DIALOG Accession No. 0013268780 (BIOSIS Accession No. 76026272), Cipriano R.C.: "Immersion and injection vaccination of salmonids against furunculosis with an avirulent strain of <i>Aeromonas-salmonicida</i> " & Progr Fish-Cult 44 (4). 1982. 167-169.	1, 2, 4-6, 10, 16, 17, 19-21, 25, 31-38, 41-42
X	DIALOG, File CAB ABSTRACTS, DIALOG Accession No. 0270249, Cipriano R.C. et al.: "Immunization of salmonids against the fish pathogen, <i>Aeromonas Salmonicida</i> " & Journal of The World Mariculture Society 1983. 14 201-211	41-42

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET

V. ☒ OBSERVATIONS WHERE CERTAIN CLAIMS WERE FOUND UNSEARCHABLE ¹

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2) (a) for the following reasons:

1. ☒ Claim numbers 32-38 because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

See PCT Rule 39.1(iv)

Method for treatment of the human or animal body by means of surgery or therapy, as well as diagnostic methods.

2. ☐ Claim numbers because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

3. ☐ Claim numbers because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of PCT Rule 6.4(a).

VI. ☐ OBSERVATIONS WHERE UNITY OF INVENTION IS LACKING ²

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application as follows:

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims of the international application.
2. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims of the international application for which fees were paid, specifically claims:
3. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claim numbers:
4. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the International Searching Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by applicant's protest.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

**This Page is Inserted by IFW Indexing and Scanning
Operations and is not part of the Official Record**

BEST AVAILABLE IMAGES

Defective images within this document are accurate representations of the original documents submitted by the applicant.

Defects in the images include but are not limited to the items checked:

- ☒ **BLACK BORDERS**
- ☐ **IMAGE CUT OFF AT TOP, BOTTOM OR SIDES**
- ☐ **FADED TEXT OR DRAWING**
- ☒ **BLURRED OR ILLEGIBLE TEXT OR DRAWING**
- ☐ **SKEWED/SLANTED IMAGES**
- ☒ **COLOR OR BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS**
- ☐ **GRAY SCALE DOCUMENTS**
- ☒ **LINES OR MARKS ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT**
- ☐ **REFERENCE(S) OR EXHIBIT(S) SUBMITTED ARE POOR QUALITY**
- ☐ **OTHER:** _____

IMAGES ARE BEST AVAILABLE COPY.

As rescanning these documents will not correct the image problems checked, please do not report these problems to the IFW Image Problem Mailbox.